

THE  
TRAGEDY  
OF  
NERO,  
Emperour of  
ROME:

As it is Acted at the  
Theatre-Royal,  
By His MAJESTY's Servants.

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By NATHANIEL LEE, Gent.

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
THE  
ROMAN  
EMPERORS

FROM  
THE  
FALL  
OF  
THE  
ROMAN  
EMPIRE  
TO  
THE  
PRESENT  
TIMES

THEATRE-ROYAL  
DE  
L'OPERA  
DE  
PARIS

TO  
BE  
PERFORMED  
ON  
THURSDAY  
THE  
10TH  
OF  
MAY  
1790  
AT  
THE  
THEATRE-ROYAL  
DE  
L'OPERA  
DE  
PARIS

10 May 1790

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE  
Earl of Rochester.

My Lord,

**P**OETS for the most part in their Dedications miss of their design, which should be to please that Honourable Person, whose protection they desire. For what pleasure can a Noble Spirit (whose ingenuity equals its height) receive an exorbitant Praise and ill tim'd Applause? Not that the severest Cynick should snarl at just Commendations and due Encomiums; such was the Epistle of Horace to Augustus Plinie's Panegyrick to Trajan, which sort of ponder'd Eloquence ought to be as Grateful to a brave and elevated Mind as Adorations to the Deity. My Business waving Insinuation is to pray, not to praise; and I hope I shall appear less troublesome to your Lordship under the form of a Begger, than that of a Flatterer. Your protection and favour is implor'd by this Humble Supplicant in the behalf of a Civil Tyrant, at least one whom I have so represented, and for which I have been sufficiently censur'd perhaps unjustly enough; since 'tis not impossible for a man to love and hate, to be brave and bad. From the Criticks, whose fury I dread those Killmen and more then Jews; I appeal to your Lord-

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

ship as the Saint did to Cæsar. To you whose Judgment vies  
remark with your Grandeur, who are as absolutely Lord of  
Wit, as those prevaricators are its slaves. To you who by  
excellent Reading and Conversation with the pleasantly wise,  
have justly limited the mighty Sallies of an overflowing Fancy,  
whose sayings astonish the Censorious, and whose Writings are  
so exactly ingenious; Princes treasure them in their Memo-  
ry, as things Divine. This is so far from flattery or untruth,  
that it appears rather an impertinent kind of asserting what  
every Man knows, as if I should gravely tell the World tis day  
at noon; which I had rather another should be smil'd at for,  
than he who is in highest Truth and lowest Humility. My  
Lord,

Your Lordships

Most Humble,

and Obedient Servant,

Nat. Lee.

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## PROLOGUE,



# PROLOGUE,

Spoken by Mr. HAINES.

**G**OOD Playes, and perfect Sense as scarce are grown,  
As civil Women in this damn'd lewd Town.  
Plain Sense, is despicable as plain Cloaths,  
As English Hatts, Bone-lace, or woollen Hose;  
'Tis your brisk fool that is your Man of Note;  
Tonder he goes, in the embroider'd Coat;  
Such wenching eyes, and hands so prone to ruffle;  
The gentile sling, the Trip and modish Shuffle;  
Salt soul and flame, as gay as any Prince  
Thus Taggs and Silks, make up your Men of Sense,  
I'm told that some are present here to day,  
Who e're they see, resolve to Damn this Play,  
So much wou'd Interest with ill Nature sway;  
But Ladies, you we hope, will prove more civil,  
And charm these Wits that damn beyond the Devil;  
Then let each Crittick here, all Hell inherit,  
You have Attractions that can lay a Spirit.  
A bloody fatal Play you'l see to night,  
I vow to Gad, 'thas put me in a fright.  
The meanest Waiter huffs, looks big, and struts,  
Gives brest a blow, then hand on hilt he puts;  
'Tis a fine Age, a tearing thundring Age,  
Pray Heav'n, this Thund'ring does not crack the Stage:  
This Play I like not now  
And yet for ought I know, it may be good,  
But still I hate this fighting, wounds, and blood,  
Why, what the Devil have I to do with Honour,  
Let Heroes court her, I cry, Pox upon her;  
All Tragedies ? Gad to me sound only.  
I can no more be serious, than you Godly.

THE

# The Persons.

*Nero*, Emperour of Rome,  
*Britannicus*, true Heir of the Empire,  
*Petronius*, *Nero's* Favorite,  
*Otho*, Husband to *Poppea*,  
*Piso*, her Brother,  
*Seneca*, *Nero's* Tutor,  
*Drusillus*,  
*Plautus*,  
*Silvius*,  
*Mirmilon*,  
*Flavius*, friend to *Britannicus*,

*Romans.*

*Poppea*, *Otho's* Wife married to *Nero*,  
*Agrippina*, The old Empress mother to *Nero*.  
*Octavia*, *Nero's* first wife sister of *Britannicus*,  
*Cyara*, Princess of *Parthia*, Mrs. of *Britannicus*.  
*Syllana*, *Poppea's* confident.  
*Romans* Gladiators.  
*Caligula's* Ghost,

Mr. *Hart*.  
 Mr. *Mehun*.  
 Mr. *Burt*.  
 Mr. *Winterfal*.  
 Mr. *Lydal*.  
 Mr. *Cartwrite*.  
 Mr. *Clark*.  
 Mr. *Coysh*.  
 Mr. *Watson*.  
 Mr. *Powell*.  
 Mr. *Harris*.

Mrs. *Marshall*.  
 Mrs. *Cory*.  
 Mrs. *Cox*.  
 Mrs. *Bowtal*.  
 Mrs. *Uptiel*.  
 Mr. *Griffin*.

## The Scene Rome.

THE  
TRAGEDY  
OF  
NERO.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*Otho, Sylvius, Cyara, disguis'd.*

SYLVIVS.

WHY dost thou droop, and hang thy pensive Head?  
As if there were no end of thy Distress?  
His Sighs more frequent than the Minutes are;  
Tears hang upon his Cheeks, like Morning Dews,

On Roses: Yet I cannot blame thy Grief.

*Otho.* Sir, You amaze me with your sad relation  
That fatal Night Prince *Alamander* fell,  
I, and some more, were in our General's Tent.  
(Great *Corbulus* he's call'd), who with Success,  
Has often led our gallant *Roman* Troops,  
Against your *Parthian* Horse; as I remember,  
'Twas midnight when our Scouts, all pale with Fear,  
Came, flying, with the news of your Approach:  
Our General undisturb'd, straight gave Command  
That every Captain should his Charge perform,  
With as much Silence as was possible;  
No Drums, no Trumpets sounded, all was hush'd,  
Order in whispers, was by all receiv'd:  
So your Surprise was answered with Surprise.

Act I

And gain'd us, without the Victory;  
For 'tis our Custom frequently to sleep  
Whole Nights in Arms, never to rest secure.

*Cyara.* Our Loss, indeed, was great; but Oh! that Loss  
Of Losses, our dear Prince, surpasses all!

For him, our Court now mourns; Sorrow, like Night,  
Eternal Night, spreads Horror all around:  
All Noble Hearts are cover'd with despair;  
For our bright *Sun* must never shine again.

Some dawn of Hope we had, he might be here  
A pris'ner, and unknown; but Fate decrees  
We shall not be so happy.

*Orb.* Sir, wherein

My Service may prove beneficial  
Or yield you any Comfort, pray command it.  
Captives, of every sort, as time permit,  
I'll bring before you: if your Eye can read  
A line, that's your Prince in any face,  
Examin it to th' full. Mean while, be pleas'd  
To take a strict Survey of all the Court,  
The greatest, and most flourishing on Earth.

*Syl.* So every Tongue reports it; a full Orb  
Of matchless Glory, where your Emperor  
Rules, like the *Sun*, and gives each Noble, warmth.

*Oth.* Nothing appears, alas, as heretofore;  
The darkness of his horrid Vices, have  
Eclips'd the glimmering rays of his frail Virtue:  
His cruelties, like Birds of prey, have pick'd  
All seeds of Nobleness from his false heart;  
And now it lies a sad dull lump of Earth,  
Impatient of wise Council, and Reproof,  
Today he dooms his Mother to be slain;  
Swears, that she plots against his Crown, and life:  
Sentence is past, and the poor *Queen's* betray'd.  
See where she comes.

[*Emperor, Octavia, Britannicus, Seneca, Drusillus, Piso, Plautus, Agrippina, led by two Virgins, all in white, a Dagger, and bowl of Poyson carry'd before her: Courtiers and Guards following. Britannicus kneels.*]

*Cya.* O, *Sylvius*, I am lost! there, there he kneels;  
My flames increase, my Soul new Passions feels,  
My Flight from *Parthia* I'll no more regard;  
All was too little, for so great Reward.

*Ner.* To me?

*Plau.*



# The Tragedy of Nero.

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*Plau.* Dread Sir, the Prince *Britannicus*.

*Ner.* Say you?

*Plau.* He kneels.

*Ner.* Sir, would you ought with me?

*Brit.* Nor for my self, but for the *Queen*, thus low  
I fall, and beg you would some pity shew.

Cast from your breast, this rank and Poys'nous hate!

Alas, how many do repent too late?

In acts of Love, *KINGS* are best understood:

Hell makes some great; 'tis *GOD*-like to be good.

It is your Mother——

Oh that that Sacred name should not avert

Your wrath! nor, with its softness, melt your heart!

Your Mother 'tis, whom you command to bleed:

What will the cens'ring World think of this deed?

*Ner.* Why, let it think: if *Asper* bray, must I

Regard? I say again, that she shall dye.

Why is she not to Execution led?

She's plotting now. *Drusillus*, see her dead.

*Sene.* If, for the guilty, we to *Heaven* may pray,

Can you the Innocent——

*Ner.* Old Fool, away.

*Brit.* Justice is robb'd, his Sword and Scales you move;

Sweet Mercy starts, and striking, flies above.

Where, to the Gods, such horrid tales of you

She does relate, as they can scarce think true:

Fate trembles, as she writes in her Book;

Ev'n *Jove*, with horror of this fact, is shook.

New points his Thunder, brandishes Pth'Ayr

Dread Lightning, and, with *Rome*, intends a War.

*Ner.* Let him begin; my purpose I'll maintain,

Though he should scorching showers of *Sulphur* rain.

Though he stood near——

And from some neighbouring Cloud, did hurl down fire,

With fresh recruits of men, his arm'd fire

And she, at last, should spight of him expire:

Would he were here, to end the grand debate:

But why, with you do I capitulate?

My word's an Oracle, and stands her Fate.

*Octa.* Ah, *Cesar*, if you can thus cruel prove

To her, and lay aside all filial Love,

What must I then expect, who am your Wife,

But that you, shortly too, should take my life?

By all the pleasures of our Marriage bed,

*Ner.* I swear, speak one word more, and thou art dead.

*Brit.* Tyrant, this must not be, while I draw breath.

B

Ner.



# The Tragedy of Nero.

*Ner.* Then thou dy'st too.

*Brit.* Lo, thus I brave my death.

*Ner.* Ha! does he smile?

By all the *Gods*, I'll quickly change your mirth:

With my own hand, I'll cut thee from the earth.

*Oth.* Dread Sir—

*Ner.* Was ever such an insolence?

*Brit.* Sir, what I did was in my own defence.

When e're I rise against your Sacred head

In thought, may loads of Thunder strike me dead.

You are my Master, and *Rome's* Emperour;

May you live long, and make right use of pow'r.

*Cya.* Guard him, you *Gods*, and save his innocence.

*Ner.* So Sir: yet she shall dye. Go, take her hence.

*Otha.* Oh, how my tender heart does *Sympathise*!

Grief strikes me dumb, and pity fills my eyes.

*Agr.* Thou savage Monster, seed of Rocks, more wild,

More wild than the fierce Tygres, of her young beguil'd,

*Barbarian*! who in some dark cave wert bred,

Made drunk with poyson, with corruption fed,

Offspring of Hell! But, oh, my lab'ring mind

Cannot get vent, nor fit expressions find,

Why was I made so strong? Oh my accurst!

Grief swells me up, and yet I cannot burst.

*Ner.* Why would she thus in torments here remain?

I pity her: go put her out of pain.

*Agr.* Tyrant, wherein have I deserv'd this base

And barbarous usage?—Oh my foul disgrace!

*Ha!* shall I tell it to the World, or dye,

And in my *Urn*, let all in silence lye?

My Soul doth struggle, with its load of woes;

Woes much more horrid than those painful throws.

My body felt, when first I brought to light

This cursed Son, now *Basilisk*, to fight.

*Ner.* Am I to be obey'd? how dare you stay?

Furies and Hell! be gone, take her away.

*Agr.* Oh stay a while, ere I lose my breath

Hear my last words; more dreadful than my death.

Bear me some winged *G O D*, and fix me High

On some tall *Pyramid*, that hits the Sky;

Place all the World, on the vast rounds below,

And make my voice so loud, that all may know:

This Monster, under *Tyrian* purple hid,

Did force a passage to his Mother's bed.

Where are thy dreadful bolts; (to *Jove* I call)

Strike him, or me, amiss they cannot fall.

Oh

# The Tragedy of Nero.

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Oh horrid fact to tell ! it wounds my ear :  
The Day and Night together mingled were.  
Monster of men, who alter'd Nature's course,  
The stream ran backwards, and found out the Source.

*Ner.* The Beldame raves; *Drusillus*, take her hence :  
All this is forg'd; *Heaven* knows my innocence.  
A moments respite I will not afford,  
But when she's dead let *Orbo* bring me word.

{ *Exe. severally*  
*Nero & Agrip.*

*Manent Pifo, Plautus, Mirmilon.*

*Pifo.* Very well. Hark ye, Gentlemen, may we talk ?

*Plau.* Treason ? No.

*Pif.* Then I'll hold my peace.

*Mir.* Faith, I know not, but there was a stranger here yesterday hang'd  
for looking suspiciously.

*Pif.* Very good; 'twas an excellent memorandum; therefore I'll shut  
my eyes, and not look at all, or hereafter always in company wear a  
Masque.

*Plau.* Not so *Sir*, if you tender your safety; such reservation argues  
thoughtfulness: now the Emperour can't endure a man that's given to  
meditation; hates a Philosopher, as much as he loves a Fidler; *Seneca*,  
to my knowledge, is burthen to him; in my hearing, he call'd him crazy  
Caterpillar, and venerable Book-worm.

*Mir.* Right, *Plautus*. Therefore, *Pifo*, be not thoughtful; 'tis dange-  
rous. A friend of mine (hark ye) this morning, by the Emperor's Or-  
der, had his throat cut, for being thoughtful.

*Pif.* The good *Empress*——

*Plau.* How *Sir* ?

*Pif.* Well, the *Empress* then. Alas, how sudden, from the top of  
Glory——

*Mir.* Alas ! do you pity her then ?

*Pif.* I, *Sir*. Greatness and Goodness are——

*Plau.* What, *Sir* ?

*Pif.* I know not, nor where, unless in the other World.

*Mir.* You weep, *Pifo*, have a care, a sort of liquid Treason.

*Pifo.* 'Twas your hair hit my eye, and caused this Rheum:

I'll to the Country again. Farewel, Gentlemen.

Long live the Emperour; that's no Treason.

*Mir.* No, *Sir*, no: Adieu, good *Pifo*. He wears an honest heart.

[*Exeunt.*

B 2

SCENE,

## The Tragedy of Nero.

## SCENE, the Court.

Nero, Otho, Seneca, Drusillus, &c. Agrippina, dead.

Oth. She is, as you would have her, (Sir) no more:  
See where she lies, all stained with her own gore.  
She said, an ancient Man bid her beware  
Of ever seeing you made Emperor;  
For you, at last, would cause her to be slain:  
Then let me die, she said, so he may Reign.

Ner. How wisely then did I her Death decree!  
For 'twould have been a great impiety  
To let her live, and mar the Prophecy.

Oth. Choice of two Deaths, by your command, we gave:  
But she cry'd, both; a double death I'll have:  
One poy's'nous drop, for Heaven, I would not sell;  
Each drop will sink his Soul more deep in Hell;  
In her right Hand, the Dagger she did hold;  
And with her left, she heav'd the Fatal Gold,  
And drunk the venom off: that being done,  
Deep, in her brest, the keen Stiletto run:  
With many wounds she made her bosom gay;  
Her wounds like flood-gates, did themselves display;  
Through which, life ran, in scarlet streams away.

Ner. Remove her hence. My Soul now free does walk,  
And shall no more be clogg'd with moral talk.  
My Statue shall be made of lasting steel:  
Before it, Lords of Rome shall humbly kneel.  
Great Julius and Augustus you adore;  
And why not me who have their very Pow'r?  
To them you daily offer Sacrifice:  
I am a GOD; my self I canonize.

Sen. 'Mongst Gods their Glory shines now they are gone!  
Because, with us, like Stars their Virtues shone.

Ner. Vertue's a name; Religion is a thing  
Fitter to scare poor Priests, than daunt a KING:  
Swift, as quick thought, through every art I range;  
Who but a GOD, like me, could Sexes change?  
Sporus be witness of my mighty Art;  
Sporus, now Lady, once Lord of my heart.  
At my command, the fragrant Winds do blow  
The willing floods in waves of Balsom flow:  
This hand does all the sweets of Nature sow.

Tran-

## The Tragedy of Nero.

I ransack Nature; all its treasures view;  
Beings annihilate, and make a-new;  
All this can I, your *God-like Nero*, do.

*Sen.* What Fiend is this which, in his Breast, unspy'd,  
Bears up his Soul on such large Wings of pride?  
Let me not dye for speaking what is true:  
All this you would, but (alas!) cannot do.

*Ner.* Ha!

*Sen.* If you do well, and noble Acts atchieve,  
When e're you dye, all honest hearts will grieve;  
Each *Roman* will to after Ages tell,  
How good, how great, how excellent you fell;  
What pity 'twas that you should die so young!  
Thus shall your Honour sound from every Tongue:  
But, though your Fame survive, your Body must  
Rot, and be crumbled into common dust.  
Each grain of which, because you once did reign,  
Will not turn Gold, nor any lustre, gain:  
Yours, and the Beggars dust alike must pass,  
Instead of Sand, to fill Times hour-glass.

*Ner. Gown-man*, thou ly'st—

The World's eternal, and its *Monarch*, I:  
Then how is't possible for me to dye,  
Yet give me creature immortality?  
If when I leave this World, men shou'd debate  
The manner; Say, I did my self translate.  
The Glory of my *Godhead* I will shrowd  
Not in a Mantle, but in a perfum'd Cloud.  
In smoak of Incense I will mount above,  
And, in his Throne, take the right hand of *Jove*.

*Sen.* O murd'ring pride, thou dost all reason kill!  
You will have Altars too?

*Ner.* Yes, Slave, I will;  
Altars of Gold, in Crystal Temples built:  
No blood of Bulls, nor Goats, shall there be spilt;  
Such coarse rank smoak may sooty *VULCAN* please,  
*Pluto*, or horned *Pan*; dull Deities!  
The best of humane gore shall wash my Shrine;  
*Neroes* shall bleed, and they are half Divine.  
In cases made of Diamond entire,  
Stars shall instead of Lamps lend their bright fire,  
Each common *God* shall, in his turn, be *Priest*,  
And for your lower world make his request:  
Then offer up a grateful Sacrifice,  
*Kings* heads, *Queens* hearts, and charming Virgins eyes.

*Enter*



## The Tragedy of Nero.

Enter Petronius.

*Sen.* O Heaven! his blasphemies no limit have;  
His brutish impudence our Gods does brave:  
Without controll he does their pow'r defy,  
And I, like midnight hush'd, stand trembling by.  
I'll speak, although he blast me with his breath;  
Repentance too may win him for my death.  
Dread Sir, if you would please——

*Ner.* Fond Preacher, hence.  
Gods! can I still endure his insolence?  
Guards, seize him; go, let him in prison howl,  
And solace there his melancholy soul.

[Ex. Oth. Sen. &amp; Guards.

But, dear *Petronius*, how shall I requite  
Thee, who sole Author art of my delight?  
When my heart sickens, still thou bring'st me ease,  
And dost my fancy with new Objects please.

*Pet.* To sooth your soul, ruff'd with this late storm,  
My care found out so sweet, so rare a form,  
So full of blooming graces in each part,  
As well deserves the conquest of your heart.  
Not purple Violets, i'th' early spring,  
Such graceful sweet, such tender beauties bring.  
The Orient blush which does her cheeks adorn  
Makes Coral pale, vies with the Rosy morn.  
Not *Venus*, sprung from the Seas snowy foam,  
*Neptunes* bright Seed, her whiteness can o'r'e-come.  
*Cupid* has took a surfeit from her eyes;  
When e're she smiles, in Lambent fire he fries:  
And when she weeps, in pearls dissolv'd he dyes.

*Ner.* Hold, hold; I am o'recharged with this excess:  
Thy deeds are great, but make thy boasting less.  
What is her name, and where does she lie hid?

*Pet.* She's the partner of Lord *Otho's* bed;  
*Poppea* nam'd: With gold I brib'd her maid,  
For which the easie slave her trust betray'd.  
Nor far from *Rome* this beauty does reside;  
Chast she is thought, because yet never try'd.  
Her quick black eye does wander with desire,  
And, if I judge aright, bears wanton fire.  
Oft, as *Syllana* told me, when to Court  
Her Lord was gone, eager of unknown sport,  
She'd sigh, and in her bosom hide her face,  
And with fierce action would the wench embrace.

Dress'd



## The Tragedy of Nero.

Dress'd like *DIANA*, she in Woods is fear'd,  
And gives swift chase to all the Savage herd:  
With vigour masculine she rides along,  
Her Quiver, full of shafts, behind her hung;  
Her right hand holds a Dart, her left a Bow;  
Her long black locks, on her fair shoulders flow,  
As thickning clouds o're the *Sun's* brightness grow. }

*Ner.* Thou dear procurer of my most loved joys,  
Fly, fly; the least delay my life destroys.  
Now try thy skill; this is indeed a task:  
Win her, and thou hast more than thou canst ask.

*Exit Petronius.*

Let phlegmatick dull *KINGS*, call Crowns their care:  
Mine is my wanton; and does Beauties share  
Above my Mistress Eyes. On, *Nero*, on;  
Spend thy vast stock, and riot in thy Throne.  
If there be pleasure yet I have not found,  
Name it, some *GOD*: 'Tis mine, though under ground:  
No nook of Hell shall hide it from my sight,  
But I will conjure't into open light.  
My Scepter, like a charming rod, shall raise  
Such sports, as would old *Epicures* amaze:  
Pleasures so rich, so various, and so new,  
As never yet the *Gods*, my great forefathers, knew.

*[Exit.]*

*Finis Actus primi.*

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## ACT II. SCENE I.

*Drusillus and a Roman.*

*Drusil.* **B**Arbarous and horrid! O, the raging Fiend,  
When will his black impieties have end?  
The great, the wise, the worthy *Seneca*  
Is by this Bloody Monster made away.  
Poor City! whither are thy Founders fled,  
To what low distant Regions of the dead,  
That at their Country's call they will not rise,  
And this ungovern'd Tyrant's rage chastise?  
*Ro.* I saw the best and wisest of Mankind,  
The Pilot of the Will, the guide o'th' Mind,

*Dying*

## The Tragedy of Nero.

Dying and pale; from every gen'rous Vein  
 Base Executioners his life did drein;  
 By *Nero* kill'd, by *Nero* whom he lov'd;  
 Whose Youth by painful Studies he improv'd,  
 And warm'd so long the Viper in her Breaſt,  
 That the kind Hoſt was poiſon'd by the Gueſt.

*Dru.* In vain we mourn: Some noble *Roman* ſhould  
 Dare to be glorious, dangerously good,  
 And kill this Tyrant; kill him gorg'd with Wine,  
 Forcing a Day, and making black Night ſhine,  
 Debauch'd, and ſordidly ambitious grown,  
 Midſt all his Revels, would the deed were done.

*Ro.* Guilt, the mind's Wild-fire, lick his Spirits up;  
 Preſs him good GODS, preſs him, until he droop,  
 Sink, and be damn'd, beneath the loweſt Hell?  
 After his death we may in ſafety dwell.

*Dru.* But, while he lives, no honeſt *Roman* may  
 Paſs night in reſt, or view one peaceful day.

[Exeunt.]

## S C E N E II. The Country.

*Otho, Poppea, Petronius, Piſa.*

*Petr.* **W**Hy ſhould ſuch God-like forms inhabit here,  
 And bleſs th' ignoble fort?

*Otho.* Pr'ythee, no more:

She ſha' not go to Court; there's diſcord in't.

*Pet.* Now by your Lady's lovely Eyes I ſwear,

That Country ſounds not half ſo well to me.

Is it more harmony to hear a Clown

Whiſtle his dull Tunes, which you conſtrue ſolemn,

Than ſee a Lady ſoftly touch her Lute,

And breath an Ay to the melodious ſtrings?

Her Beauty and her Voice ſo raviſhing,

That each Spectator's Soul is left in doubt

Where firſt to mount, into the eye or ear.

The Court!

Now, by my Honour, dearer than my Life;

And, as I action love, I think the Court

May well be termed the Noble Rendezvous

Of Gallant Spirits: 'tis a Circle, Sir.

*Oth.* More I'll allow, it is a Golden Circle;

But, like the *Carthaginian Hero's* **KING,**

It carries poiſon: 'Tis a fatal Circle;

Upon

# The Tragedy of Nero

11

Upon whose Magick skirts, a thousand Devils  
In Crystal forms, sit tempting Innocence;  
And becken early Virtue from its Center.

*Piso.* Now, by my Life, I think you count it ill  
I view thee, and o'th' sudden, something calls  
Thee Traytor.

Brother, I never lov'd this man; that's all.

*Pet.* Why should you lose me on a bare Suspicion?  
The Gods ram Curses on me, thick as Hail,  
If e're I harbour'd, in this Breast, a Thought  
But what was Noble, of your spotly Loves,  
I must be bold to say you've done me wrong;  
And, but I have by Oath inviolable  
Sworn you a Friendship firm as Destiny,  
Protecting you and yours, I should not thus  
Tamely put up your angry Brother's Terms.

*Orb.* Your pardon, generous friend, he was too blame;  
Let my Repentance set all right again;  
Indeed I am asham'd for what was past.

*Pet.* See, our Contention has disturb'd your Lady;  
And call'd the precious Dew into her Eyes.

*Orb.* No more, my dear; nay, if thou lov'st me, cease.

*Pet.* I wonder that the Emperor's so long;  
I wrote to have him call *Orb.* to Court;  
I employ him there, and come in person thither.

## SCENE III. The Court.

*Octavia, Britannicus.*

*Octa.* **A**H, dearest Brother, be not too secure;  
*Syrens* most dreadful are, when they allure;  
I dread him most, since your last noble strife,  
And fear he is plotting 'gainst your precious life,  
Of which you ought to have a tender care,  
Because your Sister claims so deep a share;  
For, hear me, Gods, the doom which you decree  
This gallant Prince, shall prove my Destiny.

*Brit.* Fear not my life; he cannot be so base;  
I have some Friends, that all his mischiefs trace;  
If ought against me move, their care will find  
Some means to let me know what is design'd.

*Oct.* HEAV'N ever shield you from his violence;  
His kindness, to you, is but meer Pretence,  
And if he smiles, 'tis at your Innocence.

C

The

The Crystal of his Eye is clouded o're,  
That his dark thoughts my *Genius* can't explore.  
E're while I met him,

The Fates sit working on his gather'd brows;  
Slow steps he takes, and murmurs as he goes,  
Starts, and fixt looks upon the *Terras* throws.

*Brit.* Mild as calm Martyrs, I could death receive;  
Two reasons, only, make me wish to live:  
Two Debts remain to pay, most nobly due:  
Love claims the first, t'other I owe to you.

*Offa.* Within your Breast does Love chief Regent stand?  
I thought that Reason there had sole command.

*Brit.* Never was heart so pitifully kind,  
So capable of Love's impression made;  
With me, all Beauties gentle usage find:

The humble, charm; the mighty do invade,  
Last Year, unknown to *Parthia* I did go,

And view'd the Court; beheld the gallant foe  
Of *ROME*, Prince of *Alamander*, whose great Name  
Sounds loud, and almost cracks the Cheeks of Fame.

*Bellona* then, as *Goddeſs* of our Arms,  
I did adore; but soon felt softer charms:

The curious Prince within my looks did find  
Something that wrought upon his Noble mind,

Discours'd me, call'd me friend, and did confess  
He never lov'd a man to such excess.

One day, (Oh day most fatal to my rest!)  
After a thousand kindnesses express,

He took me by the hand, and gently said,  
Dear friend, there is a young and noble Maid

That fain would see you. Bowing, I reply'd,  
*Sir*, I am yours, and to your service ty'd.

*Offa.* Your story yet has no great cause to fright.  
*Brit.* At length, we came; but such a glorious sight,

Such a bright Flux of Rays on tender Sense,  
Such charming Softness, such sweet Excellence,

Words may describe, but never can define!  
The Sun ne're saw an object so Divine!

Fancy can't reach it! above fiction fair!  
All the sweet lines of Beauty center'd there.

Unlike to *Cesar's* was my amorous Doom,  
I came, I saw, but was my self o'recome.

It was his Sister,  
*Cyara* nam'd, that Royal charming Maid;

My Soul was rapt with Joy, though shook with dread:



# The Tragedy of Nero.

13

So *Angels*, when they stoop to mortal fight, revere there; there I strike with awe, yet ravish'd with delight.

*Of.* Why did you not your noble Love declare?

*Brit.* I did; but first committed to her Ear.

The secret of my Birth, which she receiv'd

With modest Joy, and generously believ'd

Our Loves too happy were to flourish long,

Frost-nipt i'th' bud, they wither'd as they hung.

Some *Roman Slave*, I know not whom nor where,

Gave the old *KING* private Intelligence;

But the young Prince, most watchful, sent me word,

Hastn'd my flight, and would not time afford

To hear my thanks: ungrateful so I came

To *ROME*, but nourish'd still my former flame.

*Enter Cyara, and Silvius, at one door; the Emperour and Plantus at another;*

*Cya.* Yonder he stands, the *GOD's* great Master-piece!

Oh, I could ever on that Object gaze,

And lose my Senses in that goodly maze

With gay and vigorous youth his Eyes are crown'd,

Presence, and manly Graces, all around

His Noble Form, do make their bright abode,

Like Beams of Lustre circling in a *GOD*.

*Ner.* He dyes, that bold Controller of my Will;

He has oblig'd me so, that I must kill.

Why, with dull thoughts, do I my Fancy pall?

When I look sad, whole *Hecatombs* should fall.

Ha! who are they? my fretting Blood does rise:

Hands, rest; I'll try to blast him with my eyes,

Make me *Basilisk*, but one short hour,

Some *GOD*, that would be *Nero's* Emperour.

*Plau.* Oh you just Pow'rs! where is *Astrea* fled?

Foul Vice triumphs, trampling on Virtues head.

Here Fam'd *Democritus* his Teeth might show,

And *Hieracletus* might his Tears bestow.

*Ner.* I hate him deadly,

As Poverty, Diseases, or old Age;

For his wish'd death, my *Empire* I'll engage;

Not Hell, nor *Heav'n* my fierce resolves shall daunt;

First, I will act; and then I'll think upon't.

*Octavia*, follow me.

*Brit.* What does he mean?

He frowns on me, and smiles upon the *Queen*.

These ruddy drops some say ill Omens are;

*Gods*, be my Guard; but 'tis not worth my care.



I bleed within; there, there's the mortal Wound,  
For which no Cure, no Balsom can be found;  
In dreams, *Cyara*, I behold thy Charms,  
With fixt imagination of high Pleasure,  
Thy beauteous form shall flow into my Arms,  
And I embrace it as a real Treasure. *[Exit]*

*Cya.* How dull this place appears, now he is gone;  
Night's Emblem, it bemoans the absent SUN.

*Sylvia.* Madam, 'tis fit you should discover now;  
Put off the Cloud, and fair *Cyara* show.

*Cya.* E're I reveal my self, his Love I'll try.  
*Syl.* You doubt him.

*Cya.* No, it is Curiosity.

*Nero, Octavia.*

*Ner.* Your Sentence dooms me to be curst, or blest;

Can you deny me this my last Request?

All things are easie to a willing mind;

'Tis quickly done, if you will prove but kind.

*Oct.* My Soul doth with convulsive horror shake;

Name it again, for sure I did mistake.

*Ner.* That you, the Prince, your Brother's blood would spill;

No matter how, so you but swear to kill.

Here with my Dagger, let the Deed be done.

You often find him sleeping, and alone.

*Oct.* Sleeping! Oh Gods! can You your Vengeance keep?

Where is your Thunder? No, 'tis you that sleep.

Sure else, your Justice would his Vice confound.

And drive this Monster quick into the Ground.

Hell to his Soul such Impudence has given.

That he, in time, will storm your Fort of Heav'n;

In Blasphemies his Spirits do exhale;

Your high bright walls his Gyant Crimes will scale.

Oh, my heart's full.

*Ner.* Here's that will give it vent.

So, now, go tell the Gods my black intent.

*Britannicus* his death I will defer;

'Tis pretty well I've made an end of her.

Now I will haste to meet *Poppa's* Arms.

Oh, Love, assist me with thy mighty charms,

And I will raise thy wanton Altars high;

Old men and Eunuchs, shall in heaps expire.

Because incapable of thy soft fire.

# The Tragedy of Nero.

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This day my fatal Brow no Clouds shall wear;  
Till I return, *Rome* lay aside thy Fear:  
I, and the Gods of Wit, smile once a Year.

[Exit.

*Off.* Oh my *Britannicus*, my Brother!—Oh,  
Might I but see thee once, yet e're I go,  
And wander in the wide dark dens of Death:  
But, Oh! my Soul is almost out of Breath.

Enter *Britannicus*.

*Brit.* He sent me here; for what, I can't devise.

*Off.* Ah me, look here, with Pity glut thy Eyes.  
Now I am well: for thy sake I would live.  
My dear, my gentle Brother, do not grieve.

*Brit.* Gods! Gods! but they are deaf, or will not hear.  
No hopes of life? Oh my prophetick fear!  
Sigh Heart, weep Eyes; I draw each Crystal Spring:  
But 'tis my blood must be thy Offering.

*Off.* Hold, hold; *Cyara*, 'tis *Cyara's* call:  
My share I give to her, she claims you all.  
Give me your Sword: So now I've lost my fears:  
You weep too much, and yet I love those tears.  
It was a gen'rous proffer, 'twas indeed:  
Upon thy Bosom let me rest my Head;  
'Tis a soft pillow, sweetly now I rest,  
And sigh my Soul into thy gentle Breast.

[Dyes.

*Brit.* Oh stay, my dear, my most lov'd Sister, stay;  
But one word more. Her Soul is on its way:  
She's gone, she's gone; thou flow'ry sweet farewell!  
Oh where, to whom shall I my Sorrows tell!  
In every Grove and melancholy Bow're  
Thy sad untimely Loss I will deplore;  
Thy name's dear Character each Tree shall bear;  
On every letter I will drop a Tear.  
How quickly Fate our fairest Hopes betrays!  
Oh, thou short solace of my many ills,  
Adieu! Adieu my Star, my dearest Light!  
Now thou art gone, I am all dark, all Night:  
One lump I grow, and know not how I move;  
All sad, and gloomy, as the Eyes of Love.  
Trust me, thy sweetness I shall ne'er forget;  
Stiff with my Sorrows, on thy Tomb Ple sit,  
Till I, at last, into cold Marble turn,  
And, with my Pious figure, grace thy Urn.

[Exit.

Finis Actus II.

ACT.

## ACT III. SCENE I.

Britannicus with a Boy.

Brit. **W**hat is this Earth to me? why do I stay,  
 Since thou, my Joy, my dear *Octavia*,  
 Art ravish'd hence? To *Parthia* I will,  
 And in thy presence, fair *Cyara*, dye:  
 My only Comforts on thy Truth depend;  
 If thou art chang'd, my Grief shall have an end.  
 Go Sing the Song without.

## S O N G.

**VV**eep, weep, you *Muses*, drain the Springs,  
 Such Notes go warble to the strings,  
 Such Dirges as the Ravens sound  
 When Ghosts run trembling through the Ground:  
 The fairest of her Sex is dead,  
 Her tender limbs are wrap'd in lead;  
 Her Eyes, Stars envy, the Earth's pride,  
 The broad black band of Death does hide;  
 In Death's dark chamber, now she lyes,  
 Pale as the Snow, and cold as Ice.

*Chorus.*

The Grave, the lovely Grave will bring us ease,  
 There we shall sweetly sleep in downy peace;  
 There no distractions nor jealousies be,  
 But all from inord'nate passions are free:  
 The cold Tomb is free from hot love and desire;  
 It has ashes good store, but admits of no fire:  
 There men do never groan, nor women cry,  
 But all things hush'd, in solemn silence lie.

Brit. Enough, enough. Oh, my sick heart, not yet!  
 Break, break, for shame, let Nature have her debt.

*Cyara, Sylvius.*

*Cya.* Withdraw good *Sylvius*. How sad he looks!  
 Was ever man so goodly? Oh my heart,  
 Bear up! and yet I dare not speak to him.

If

If there be any charms in Womens Tongues,  
If there be any words that can infuse  
Soft love into a Bosom, and create  
A gentle passion, good *Heav'n* grant it me!  
*Sir*, may I interrupt, without offence,  
Your serious Thoughts? I've something to relate  
Which is your near Concern.

*Brit.* Mine, pretty *Sir*?

Say on, I hear you. What should his Business be?

*Cya.* 'Tis from a Lady who made me her Agent,  
A sorry one, I fear, and much unable  
To tell what she commanded me; a Story  
So lamentable, that I cannot think on't,  
But straight my Eyes o'reflow with Tears: Pardon me,  
Only a little respite, I'll go on.

*Brit.* Thou raisest something in me, which as yet  
I cannot give a name to. What can this mean?

*Cya.* *CYARA*, *SIR*, the *Parthian* Princess.

*Brit.* Ha!

Com'st thou from her? a thousand Blessings on thee.

*Cya.* A thousand curies, rather, for my News.  
My Name's *Coralbo*, her unhappy Kinsman,  
To my poor faith she did the mighty Honour  
Of telling the sad Stories of your Loves.  
It was her chance, a dismal chance indeed,  
That Day you fled, as she was sitting at  
The Palace Window, striking of her Lute;  
Thoughtful, and Virgin-like, alone, to cast  
Her Eye upon your Person; straight she blush'd;  
Wondring to see you in that Equipage;  
But soon her Brother did unriddle all:  
Amazement seiz'd her first; but when the Prince  
Was gone, she loos'd the reins, Grief had full stopt:  
She trembled, fetc'd heart-breaking sighs,  
As if her Eyes were Springs; she made Complaints  
So languishing, and with so sad an accent,  
I wonder that it kill'd her not till now.

*Brit.* I hope you come not to abuse me.

By *Heav'n*, if you do——

*Cya.* Indeed I do not:

Let that convince you, if you know her hand.  
I find he's Noble, his looks are chang'd o'th' sudden;  
I fear I've gone too far. How do you, *Sir*?

*Brit.* Well, Boy. O GODS! Devils! Hell, *Heaven*, and Earth!

*Reads.* If in the other World, I can behold ought here, it will be you, pray  
love my memory: 'Twill be a Satisfaction above the thoughts of *Paradise*,  
to your dying *Cyara*.  
I feel

# The Tragedy of Nero

I feel a mortal trembling shoot a long  
My Arteries! I'm cold! *Octavia*! *Cyara*! Oh!

*Cya*. Help, help; my Lord, *Cyara* lives; return.  
What have I done? upon thy dying lips  
Ple print my Soul, but Ple bring back thy Life.  
Fool that I was, for a fancy, thus  
To play away that Pearl, for which I would  
Have sold my Breath, my vital Spirits, my all.  
O, he returns. *Cyara* is not dead;  
Look up, my Lord; do you not know this face?

*Brit*. *Cyara*! *Heav'n*s, 'tis she! Thou charming fair,  
How am I ravish'd with thy Glorious presence!  
O, who would live on Earth, sultry and hot,  
Under a Load of care, did he once taste  
The pleasures of these cool immortal shades?  
O the refreshing sweets which the Winds blow  
From ever-budding flowers eternal Spring!

*Cya*. Where, Sir?

*Brit*. Why, herein blest *Elizium*.

*Cya*. O he is lost, distracted!

*Brit*. Look, look, my dear, pry thee let's walk along,  
The Grass does shine with more Emerald green,  
Each purling Brook like liquid Plate appears,  
And every pebble seems a Diamond;  
Tall burnish'd trees with Fruit of Massy Gold!  
Upon whose boughs, all fair and *Heav'nly* forms  
Sit sweetly warbling to their Loves below.  
See yonder's *Octavia*, my Sister, look,  
Pale and forlorn, in a close gloomy,  
Her *Airy* substance thus I will condense,  
And to squeeze water, 'cause I cannot weep.

*Cya*. Ah Prince, *Cyara* lives, and I am she.

*Brit*. Thou art a lying Boy: O Gods my Head!

*Cya*. Do you not know me, Sir? look wistly on me.

*Brit*. *Cyara*'s Picture! just such charming eyes!

Such snowy hands, such lips, such winning smiles!

Such tendernefs! such was her every Grace!

But Oh! you told a false, a fatal tale,

The accent of thy voice is different:

She could not lye, for she was all perfection:

All beauty sickned when she left the World.

*Cyara*, Oh thou fair one! Glorious Saint,

Thou could'st not dye for me, desertless me.

*Cya*. She is not dead, but lives, and loves you, Sir.

*Brit*. Thou dost associate with Lawyers sure,

And



And Travellers.

*Cya.* Who I, *Sir*? why?

*Brit.* Because

Thou ly'st extremely, Boy: No, she is dead;  
The Canopy of *Heav'n* is hung with Sable;  
The *Sun*, like a great Mourner, drives her Hearse,  
Wrap'd round with Clouds; each Star withdraws  
His Golden head, and burns within his Socket.  
The whole cope is dark, black, dismal,  
And mourns the sudden loss of fair *Cyara*.  
Ha! though; yonder flies a Night-Raven,  
In each black eye there rowls a pound of Jet.  
See how he fans with his huge wicker Wings  
The dusky *Ayr*. Come, Boy, be gone.  
I'll save thee, though I dye me self: go in;  
Run, run, I say, I'll fetch my Bow and shoot him! [Exeunt]

SCENE, The Country.

*Petronius*, *Poppea*. *Piso*, over-hearing.

*Pop.* I must not hear you, *Sir*.  
*Petr.* Can you despise  
A flame, whose matchless splendor drowns the Stars,  
And lustre vies with the great Eye of Day?  
O scrupulous Virtue art thou grown so cold,  
That the reflected Beams of doubled Honours,  
Beating upon thee with incessant Glories,  
Cannot approach thee, through thy walls of Ice?  
With all their fiery points, cannot once pierce thee?  
*Pop.* High minds should not be tempted with appearance,  
Nor drawn to dangerous courses from homely Cells,  
Where honest pleasure with safe plenty dwells.  
*Petr.* But what converse, what Nobleness is here  
To deck your Thoughts, that claim a vaster Sphere;  
Through all the *Heav'n* they should, like Eagles, roam,  
Not stay in such a solitary home.

*Pop.* What unknown Guests are these that tear my Breast?  
Like slaves, in Golden Mines, they dig their way:  
A Crown they shew, which my frail heart adores;  
Before my thoughts a Royal Scepter flies,  
At which, my Fancy grasps; but when it comes,  
And it bright Glories offer to my hand,  
I fain would reach, and yet refuse to hold.

ym

D

*Petr.*

*Petr. Madam, consider 'tis a mighty proffer ;  
'Tis not this Province, or that Colony ;  
He gives you all : All is a gift so great,  
As none but *Jove* to *Cesar* can bestow.  
What is it deters you from your Happiness ?*

*Pop. Oh, I am lost in Honours Labyrinth,  
No clew to guide me, but my own desire,  
And that would lead me out, but knows not how.*

*Piso. Oh Heaven, what will this Earth come to ! Was it for this my  
Noble Brother was sent for in so much haste ? and is it for this, he har-  
bours that Viper in our House, to tear his Darling hence, and eat his  
Heart out ? O Laws of Hospitality, why are you Sacred ? Why is my  
Hand so backward to punish that Ravisher of our Honour ?*

*Methinks I see that Genius of our House  
Start from his Monument, and stalk along  
Shaking with Panick Fears, and with an Eye  
That darts its poyson'd Beams of Indignation  
At me : methinks I see him chide my slow  
Revenge.*

*Pop. My Brother has lost his Senses.*

*Piso. I would I had, and with them lost my Life,  
So thou could'st find thy Honour : Oh thy Honour !  
More worth, than all that Golden Pageantry,  
High tops of Fortune, Glorious Pinacles,  
And *Heav'n* knows what, that swim in thy fond Fancy :  
Those wanton Sepulchres have swallowed it ;  
Thy Eyes, those graves of Nobleness and Glory,  
I've known the time, when, had I look'd but thus,  
Thus curiously upon thee, straight a Blush  
Would mount into thy cheek : there's nothing now  
But pale Dishonour. Prithee do not speak,  
Thy Words are pestilent, the blasting issue  
Of a corrupted Heart, diseas'd, and deadly.*

*Pop. How should he know this ? sure he over-heard  
Petronius talking with me : 't must be so.  
But pray why is't a sin to go to Court ?  
I am not guilty of one wicked thought,  
And yet you make me a most wretched Creature ;*

*Piso. Indeed thou art a sinful wretched Creature.  
Thou art the wretched'st thing I ever saw :  
Thy Blood is all o'fire ; the Emperour,  
That *Dog-star* has inflam'd it ; I pity thee.  
O that my Tears could make thy Heart relent,  
Or quench those Fires that will devour thee ;  
Then I would drain those Crystal Sources dry :  
Rivers I'd weep, and long luxuriant streams,*

## The Tragedy of Nero.

21

My Eyes should play the Wantons, not thy way.  
If thou hast any sense of Shame, look back;  
Thy Feet upon the Brink of Ruin stand;  
But one step more, and thou art lost for ever:  
Glorious destruction, glitt'ring miseries,  
Will keep thee waking till Death close thy eyes.

[Weeps.]

*Petr.* Fie, fie, my Lord; were your surmises true,  
This is too much: it shews unmanly.

*Piso.* Ha!

It will not be: rather than suffer this,  
Let me be ever branded, base, and barbarous.  
My rage is kindled, and I'll bear no more,  
Begone, thou Monster, fly, thou Harpy, fly;  
Put on thy Wings of Horror, and be gone,  
Or, by my Honour, were this house a Temple,  
Thy base black blood should stain the sacred Floor.

[Exe. *Petro.* and *Poppea* smiling on him.]

*Piso.* I am troubled; yet there is one way left:  
Revenge, revenge! O thou art sweet and lovely!  
I'll go to *ROME*, and with wrong'd *Osbo* joyn.

[Trumpet sounds.]

What means this noise?

*Servants* running over the Stage.

[Within. *The Emperour,*  
*the Emperour!*]

*Plau.* The Emperour, my Lord, is come in person hither.

*Piso.* Ha! is it so? then all fond Hopes farewell:  
Diseases be his welcome. O, I am mad.  
This night he whore's my Sister. Hell, hear my Pray'r!  
Despair, Revenge, and Murther, come along:  
Bring you all your curst crew and come along:  
In fatal Business I'll employ you all,  
With this sole Arm *Heav'n's* Vengeance I'll forestall:  
An act so great, pale *Brutus* shall desire  
To see, *Cato* and *Cassius* shall admire.  
Start not, my Soul, but do't; *Poppea* dyes,  
My Anger's Victim, Honour's Sacrifice.  
Her Beauties, so ador'd, so much admir'd,  
With Pride and sensual pleasure so inspir'd,  
Shall in a moment sicken, fade, and fall;  
Like the North-wind, I'll rush, and blast you all!  
*Nero*, prepare; for, when so'ere I come,  
Immortal as thou art, I bring thy doom.  
I'll make that Cedar tremble like a reed:  
*Nero* shall dye; that vaunting *God* shall bleed.

*The Scene changes. After a Song, the Emperour comes in Royally attended, bowing to Poppa, &c. Petronius.*

*Ner.* Model of *Heav'n*, thou Ornament of Earth,  
Propitious Star that smiles on humane Birth!  
Or art thou Goddess of the silver Floods?  
Or the fair *Heav'nly* Huntress of these Woods?  
Or art thou *Venus*? *Venus* wants such fire,  
When by the Graces, dress'd in bright Attire,  
She hastes to meet her Noble warrior's Arms:  
*Venus*, in height of dalliance, wants such Charms.  
Such Beauty never was by *Paris* seen;  
Such conqu'ring Ayr, and such Majestick meen.  
O, Most Divine! with Pity, bless my Flame.

*Pop.* Be not deluded, *Sir*; I mortal am.

*Ner.* If thou of mortal seed art born, be mine,  
And I will make thee  
More happy, than those pow'rs we call Divine.  
To please thy sense, and ravish thy soft pow'rs,  
I'll make such Groves, Springs, and Royal Bow'rs,  
As shall transcend the blest *Elizian* shade,  
*Tenpe's* fair grave, and *Ida's* flow'ry head,  
Where the Gods meet, and dance in Masquerade.  
For Baths, we will *Hydaspes* current lave,  
Lie close incircl'd in a Golden Wave:  
Thou *Queen* Triumphant; I thy humble slave.  
Lo, at thy feet, *Nero* himself does lie,  
He that commands the Earth, the Sea, the Skie;  
For love of thee, does languish, sigh, and die.

*Pop.* Is all this true? can you do all these things?  
Good *Heav'n* what happy Creatures are you **KINGS**!

*Ner.* If thy Heart bears such softness as thy Breast,  
Then I am happy, then I'm truly blest.  
All my dear Joys are treasur'd in those eyes,  
Those kinder Stars, those *Suns* of *Paradise*,  
Without thy smiles, alas, I nothing am,  
But the poor shadow of a mighty name.

*Pop.* How my Soul's rack'd, with Joy and anxious Fear,  
Fain I would go, and yet would tarry here,  
Whence do these new Desires and Wishes come?  
Fain I would see I know not what, nor whom.  
How rarely this **KING** talks! how far above  
My Lord's grave rules of Duty and of Love!

*Ner.* About thy knees, O, let me ever grow.

*Pop.* Why do you weep?

*Ner.*



*Ner.* My Eyes shall ever flow; I will not  
Or, if these tender Sources should decay,  
My thawing Soul shall melt itself away.  
O stay! Ple follow thus, if you remove,  
And hold thee fast with all the force of Love.

*Pop.* Why is my Heart in its Resolves so slow?  
Like a fond Child, when two gay things you show,  
With wondring Eyes it looks, does leap, and quake  
For both; yet, doubtful, neither can partake.  
*Heav'n's!* how he pants! how his Lips warm my Hand!

*Ner.* They draw their heat from this warm firebrand.  
*Petr.* She yields, she yields! her looks her thoughts betray  
Greatness is enter'd, and her Soul gives way.  
Follow her still, and let her take no rest:  
She thinks it Pleasure to be so oppress'd.

*Pop.* What must the price of all these Pleasures be?

Nature's choice off'ring, Art's variety  
Of noisy Shows, and mighty Gallantry!

*Ner.* The price of all is but thy gentle Love.  
Secure, in *Heav'n*, as *Juno* keeps her *Jove*,  
Thou shalt keep me, fetter'd in golden Chains;  
The soft sad story of my pleasing pains,  
In sighs upon thy Bosom I'll relate;  
Thy Beauty's creature, not my *Glories* fate,  
Drawn in a Chair of Gold, emboss'd all o'er  
With their great Images whom we adore,  
On Velvet floors Triumphant thou shalt ride,  
Princes shall run like Pages, by thy side:

The Sun shall, from his flaming Seat, look down,  
And of the Thund'r'er ask a brighter Throne,  
While all the Gods do blush to sit  
To see their Art by mortal Wit out-done.

*Pop.* And will you do all this for love of me?  
Are there such Charms in my Society?

*Ner.* But one short night let me your Love enjoy,  
And I, next morning, will my Life destroy.

*Pop.* Indeed you shall not; that were too severe.  
Nay, if you love me, pray live all the Year.  
For Fancy, I substantial Pleasure reap

Is that all? 'Tis very cheap.  
Tell me not what my duty does require;  
Love mans me now, and shows his sacred fire:  
To Crowns those mighty objects I aspire.  
If you dare do, as you have said, I'll do on:  
Pale Piety, *Adieu*; live here alone;  
While I go taste the pleasures of a Throne.

*Ner.*

## The Tragedy of Nero

*Nero.* Our Chariots haste: yet stay, I will not go.  
 Thou abstract of all sweets, thou melior, Oh  
 Gods! 'tis too much Joy has my Soul distress'd;  
 Weary'd with raptures, take it to thy breast,  
 On those soft Globes of Beauty let it rest.  
 Kind God of Love, O bring thy mother's Doves;  
 And waft us through the calm Celestial groves,  
 Surfeiting on each others Breast we'll stray;  
 When we want Words, and know not what to say;  
 With eyes thus languishing we'll look all day;  
 Now sigh, now smile, or thus infolded lie;  
 And all along the Milky may we'll die.

[Exeunt.]

Finis Actus Tertij.

## ACT IV SCENE I

*Nero, Poppea, sitting in State.*

*Nero.* **L**et not my Crown and self thy wish confine:  
 Ask what thou wilt; by all the Gods, 'tis thine.  
 Be studied in't, and I'll applaud thee for't;  
 Mean while, behold the pleasures of our Court.

[Dance, &amp;c.]

*Enter Britannicus, mad: and Cyara.*

*Pop.* O, my dread Lord, for these let me implore;  
 Live, wretches, and this excellence adore.

*Brit.* Stay me not? by the Gods, I'll break your hold;  
 So sad a Story, *Orpheus* never told,

When his harmonious sighs pierc'd *Pluto's* Gate;  
 But I ban *Heav'n*, curse the great Gods, and Fate

And yet I will not speak, the *Theam's* too stern;  
 Here Hell it self might witty horror learn.

Some whirl-wind snatch me headlong through the Air,  
 Wrapt round with Clouds envelop'd in Despair,

That I from Earth may hide this dismal deed;  
 Honour is stabb'd, and all the Virtues bleed.

*Cyara's* falln, *Octavia* too is gone;  
 In Death's damp Vaults she wanders all alone:

I saw her Souldive strangely through the Ground,  
 In her own Blood that spark of *Aeneas* was drown'd.

Tracfon

Treason against the Gods he did conspire;

Oh Traytor, worse than he that stole their Fire!

Ner. Who was that Traytor, Prince?

Brit. I know not, Sir,

Unless that Dog that was her Murderer.

Nero. Who was that Dog?

Brit. Why, Cerberus I guess;

No Savage else could hurt such Gentleness.

Such Meekness would wild Panthers Fury charm,

And hungry Lyons of their Rage disarm;

Ev'n o're their prey, it would the Conquest get,

Quell their swollen Hearts, and cool their bloody Heat.

Ner. Madman begone.

Brit. This Madman is a Prince.

Ner. I say again, forbear this Insolence,

Or thou shalt wish thou wert a Beggar born:

At once, thou mov'st my Pity and my Scorn.

Brit. 'Twas you that kill'd my Sister.

Ner. Ha! thou ly'st:

Stand not my rage; for, if thou dost, thou dy'st.

Brit. Then I will sit, and hear your Thunder roar;

Such humble Shrubs it hurts not, but flies o're.

Ner. But you shall find, for once, 'twill condescend:

I pity thee, and will thy Sorrows end.

Cya. Hold; by the Gods, I do conjure you, stay:

First through my Bosom force your bloody way.

In policy you ought his Life to spare;

For, if you let him live, Heav'n will forbear

To punish you, nor will due Vengeance take;

The just good Gods will spare you, for his sake.

Brit. How the Boy prattles! 'tis a pretty Boy!

Cyara's Image! how that damps my joy!

What mean these two, by such an antick form?

Here's a soft calm, and there a blust'ring Storm.

My Painter so shall draw me Day and Night:

Here horrid Darkness stands; there, gaudy Light:

There, Cruelty, like the Red Sea appears;

Here, melting Mercy flows in pitying Tears.

Exquisite Emblems! perfect good and evil:

A Heav'n, a Hell, an Angel, and a Devil.

Ner. If I gaze long, I shall my Nature lose:

Midst of my full Career I stop and muse.

Whence does this unworthy pause proceed?

Can I repent my Rage? no, he shall bleed.

*Cya.* Hold, *Sir*, you cannot strike.

*Ner.* How? cannot, *Boy*?

*Cya.* Alas, I ly'd; I know you can destroy.

You can do all things, *Sir*, both drown and burn;

Nay, the whole World to its first Chaos turn.

You are a *God* to damn, a *King* to kill:

You can do all things, if you had the Will;

But you are kind, and soft; I know you are:

Your Eyes are Noble, and delight to spare.

O *Heav'n*! how men will live! nay, now I find

You have a gentle, great, and *GOD*-like mind.

The Prince is Mad, and you are pleas'd to see;

Nay, pardon all,—O let me kiss your feet.

You'll win all hearts, if such kind Acts as these

With my warm Tears I'll bathe your sacred knees.

*Ner.* Shall I be branded with the name of good?

Begone, thou soft invader of my Blood;

Mercy and I, no correspondence have;

Pity's a whining tender-hearted slave:

Fury I love, because she's bold and brave.

As I scan things, Virtue's the greatest Crime;

Stand off; or I will pass through thee, to him.

*Pop.* Hold, *Cesar*, now I take you at your word.

If you will keep your promise, sheath your Sword.

*Ner.* 'Twere less to give the World, than let him live;

Yet your Commands with Joy I do receive.

*Brit.* What barbarous hand has done this horrid deed?

Oh, my dear Boy, look up; thou dost not bleed.

Stop, stop, thou bloody Spring; my hair perforce

Shall bind thee, and damn up the scarlet Source.

I will my self thy kind Physician be;

When I was sick thou still wert do to me;

At my Bedside, strict watch all night he'd keep,

And, with his Songs, rock my dull cares asleep.

His Cheeks are pale! *Rosès*, look forth again.

And smile for Joy your pretty Rival's pain.

Fate wove thy thred of life too fine to last.

All's lost at once! O sad! O desperate cast!

Thus, in my Arms, I'll bear thy Beauties hence;

No guilty hand shall touch thy Innocence.

Thus, arm in arm, we in one grave will live.

Wretched we liv'd, but happy we will dye.

*Pop.* What means my trembling Heart by this Surprise?

Why do I sigh? why do these Blunies rise?

Before



Before my Soul, a mournful Troop appears;  
 Hopes stifled in their Birth, starts, sudden Fears,  
 Languishing Joys, and solitary tears!  
 I love him; 'tis too plain Just *Heav'n* has sent  
 On my Inconstancy this punishment  
 I've gone too far to think of a return;  
 I must enjoy him: O my heart does burn!  
 My blood boils high, and beats with strange desires:  
 'Tis just that madnet's mingle with such fires. [Exit.

*Ner.* Thou hast a Wit; some sudden means contrive.

*Pet.* Believe me, *Sir*, this night he shan't survive. [Exit *Nero*, &c.]

*Solus.* Contrivance gives a mischief gloss——'tis fine:

I ha't—— my kinsman *Burrhus* fills his Wine;

By nature bloody——then the pow'rful charm

Of Gold, a present gain, no future harm,

Safe in the Emp'r's favour he shall live:

All this well weigh'd, my black design must thrive.

Nature has not been overkind to me:

Her limber Sons and I cannot agree:

She is my Stepdame; but my comfort is,

To pay her home, this night her darling dyes. [Exit.

## SCENE II.

*Otho, Piso.*

*Piso.* YET be advis'd, and let us end this strife.

*Oth.* Deny thy words and I will spare thy life.

*Piso.* Deny my words? what didst thou ever see

In all my life, to raise this thought in thee?

My nature's hot, provoke me, *Sir*, no more:

I do pronounce again she is a whore.

*Oth.* Blasphemer, peace; rage does my heart-strings tear:

Wert thou my Father, I could not forbear.

*Piso.* *Sir*, I dare Fight.

*Oth.* Guard well thy life.

*Piso.* I do.

This sport was ne'er unwelcome untill now.

[Fight.

You bleed.

*Otho.* No matter, *Sir*, the wound's but slight.

*Piso.* O, Brother, hear me for I will not Fight.

E

*Otho.*

Otho. You must.

Piso. I cannot. *Heav'ns!* what have I done?

Otho. Thou art a Coward: pr'ythee, Boy, begone.

Piso. Curse on my hand that drew your precious Blood!

Poppea is an *Angel* chaste and good:

I'll flatter you; I care not what I say;

Rather than still pursue this fatal fray.

Otho. Now I believe what thou hast said is true;

Pity has done what Anger could not do:

O she is false, forsworn, and I am lost,

My Soul is ship-wrack'd on its most lov'd coast;

By thy Victorious Mercy I'm undone.

Go, Noble Brother, leave this wretch alone;

O, my Heart's sick! your pardon, pray no more;

Here I will lie, and my hard Hap deplore.

Piso. Then I will sit for ever by your side;

Take it not ill, if I this tameness chide,

Rouse up your wrath, let Anger chase away

These fullen Clouds; Revenge will bring the day

Again, and make your honour shine more bright;

While it dams her to shades of death and night.

Otho. Ha! thou hast wak'd my Soul from its dull rest;

Revenge, thou gen'rous fire, enrich my breast.

*Poppea passes over the Stage.*

O glorious Whore! I'll sink her with a Blow,

She's rotten ripe for ruin; let me go.

Piso. You see her Guards will your Revenge oppose;

And thus, for nothing, we our lives shall lose.

Otho. Down, down, my swelling heart; O, I am sad:

Hold, my weak Eyes; this sight has made me mad.

Piso. Blinded with Rage, our Reason's apt to stray:

Be rul'd by me; I'll shew the safest way.

*[Exeunt.]*

### SCENE III.

*Britannicus reading, Poppea enters.*

Pop. Musing, and all alone? *Syllana*, go,

The bottom of my Fate I'll quickly know:

My Virtues are dethron'd, and Passions rule;

O *Heav'ns!* my crimes you have reveng'd at full.

*Brit.*

*Brit.* Is it a Truth? or does Fame tell us lyes,  
When it reports that the soul never dyes,  
But mantled sits, and acts in gloomy shrouds;  
Like *Cynthia*, when she's hemm'd with circling Clouds?  
When the soft partner of our griefs and joyes,  
With trembling hands shall close our dying Eyes,  
When in sad sort our friends shall stand and mourn,  
To see the fatal Torch those relicts burn,  
Is there an end of thought? no farther care?  
No Throne of Bliss, nor Caverns of despair?  
No dens of Darkness, nor no seats of Glory?  
Then all our grave discourse is but a story.  
Some full-gorg'd Priest, nodding beneath a shade,  
Tales of *Elizium*, and the dull pool, made.  
Whither, O whither, go we, when we dye?  
Why, there where Babes not yet conceiv'd do lie?  
Death's nothing; nothing after Death will fall;  
Time, and dark *Chaos*, will devour us all.

*Pop.* I come to kill thee, Prince.

*Brit.* My Boy is dead;  
To *Heav'n's* bright Throne his brighter Soul is fled:  
Yonder he mounts on silver burnish'd Wings;  
Each *God*, immortal sweets around him flings.  
Now, like a ship, he cuts the liquid Sky;  
His Rigging's Glorious, and his Mast is high;  
Fann'd with cool winds his Golden Colours fly:  
Ha! wilt thou follow him? begin: strike home.

*Pop.* I say, to kill thee (*Prince*) I hither come.  
Thy Eyes sharp Beams have run quite through my heart;  
And I, on thine, will thus revenge the smart.

*Brit.* Strike, and by *Heav'n* I'll kiss thee for the blow:  
Be quick: my blood is black and full of woe:  
Do me this welcome dangerous Cruelty,  
Fair Murdres, if thou art my Enemy.

*Pop.* Nay, sure you flatter'd when you term'd me fair.

*Brit.* If Lillyes, Snow, and Light, be such, you are.

*Pop.* If I am so, this deed would make me foul,  
And cast eternal spots upon my Soul;  
Therefore, thou horrid Instrument, be gone:  
Without thy help, alas, I am undone.  
I faint.

*Brit.* Within my Arms I'll hold thee, till  
Thy Soul return, and greedy Death beguile.  
In Rosy Gales Life through her Lips does stream.

*Pop.* Why did you wake me from this golden dream?

Oh,

Oh, I am sick!

*Brit.* I am contagious sure;  
And all that touch me dye.

*Pop.* You are my cure:

'Tis only in your power to make me live.

From those lov'd Eyes let me this Balm receive.

Within this Circle let me ever grow.

*Brit.* Thou Charmer, speak; what wouldst thou have me do?

*Pop.* Something——why, thus to press your hand, that's all.  
*Heav'n* how he shakes! why do you tremble, Prince?

*Cyara's Ghost.*

*Brit.* Ha! what art thou? thou airy phantasm, hence:

O, *Gods*! it is my Boy: what wouldst thou have?

How cold he looks, just ris'n from the Grave!

*Cya.* Go not to bed, but fly that Sorceress arms;

She tempts, like *Circe*, and has deadly Charms.

Think on *Cyara*, for she lov'd thee well:

Take heed, beware; thou'rt in the Rode to Hell.

[*Exit.*

*Brit.* Stay, I conjure thee stay, leave me not thus,

If thou didst ever love *Britannicus*.

I'll follow thee along thy Ayry track,

And mount above the clouds to fetch thee back.]

[*Exit.*

*Enter Sylvana with a Taper.*

*Silva.* O *Heav'n*s! How do you, *Madam*? what success?

*Pop.* I'll tell thee, Killing woe, and deep distress.

Thy arm my Girl; I'll shew thee e're we part

Sad things: a troubled mind, and wounded heart.

Ah! for my former peace, what would I give?

My Comfort is, this Shame I sha'nt survive.

O dismal change nothing is constant found;

The *Gods*, with whirl-winds, drive our Fortunes round.

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE, IV.

*Nero, sleeping in a Couch; Caligula's Ghost appears.*

*Ghost* **F**ROM the Infernal cave, the wide, the low  
Abyss, the direful pit of endless woe,  
On which each God that looks scarce keeps his State,  
But, giddy grown, turns and takes hold of Fate.

*Caligula*



*Caligula*, in vapours wrapt, does come,  
*Nero*, thy friend, and the sworn foe of *R.O.M.E.*  
 Not Hell's more dreadful than these hated walls;  
 The Stygian waves, and *Tenbene* water's falls,  
 Alike with fear confound my troubled Soul,  
 And sprinkle equal horrors as they rowl.  
 By Traytors hands I fell: O that I could,  
 For every drop they shed, spill Seas of Blood,  
 Oh *Heav'n*, I'd do what cannot be express'd!  
 With raging Plagues I'd fill each *Roman* Breast;  
 Burn Palaces: like Thunder, I would rave,  
 Tear the tall Woods, and rend each Sacred Grove.  
 But oh! by pow'rful Fate I am confin'd,  
 And must not reak the madness of my mind.  
*Nero*, Act thou, what can't be done by me,  
 Thy Genius, I, will aid thy cruelty:  
 With my pale hand I stroak thy troubled sense;  
 All poyson Hell contains I do dispense;  
 The scum of *Lethe*, with *Alecto's* gall,  
*Meagera's* sweat, shall on thy vitals fall;  
*Errinnis* shall about thy heart-strings twine,  
 Yet all's too little for our great design.  
 Lo, I am warn'd; see where fierce envy stands,  
 And summons me, by *Pluto's* dread commands.  
 Go on, be mad; no more, I must be gone,  
 And vanish, like the Light when Day is done.

ACT V. SCENE I. *Nero solus.*

Where have I been? thou *Dæmon* of the night  
 Return; I'm rack'd with this appalling sight.  
 The forked tongues of Furies can't express  
 The rage that burns within me: Sulphur's less;  
 Not Hell it self so full of dread appears;  
 Not Night, nor darker Death, such horror wears;  
 Not the destructive force of wind, and fire,  
 When some great City's ruin they conspire;  
 Not the devouring Sea, when *Neptune* makes  
 The Sea-Gods drunk, and draughts of ruin takes  
 Wrong'd Womens hate, Sword, Famine, Plagues combine;  
 Your madness, trebled cannot equal mine:  
 All you faint emblems of my fury are:  
 No tender Sex, nor Age, my wrath shall spare.

Enter

## The Tragedy of Nero.

*Enter Drufillus bloody.*

What News? thy looks declare it to be good,  
A hasty joy appears, though dress'd in blood.

*Druf.* The rabble, Sir, with Wine and Rage inspir'd  
With Trayt'rous hands your Palace would have fir'd:  
Your Guards they did assault; but we withstood  
Their heat, and soon allay'd it with their Blood.

Few Strokes were giv'n ere the base Cowards fled,  
Some pris'ners are, some scap'd, and some are dead.

*Ner.* Ha! do they bid me Battle? they shall die:

At their own Weapon I the Slaves defy.

Nothing but flames can quench my kindled Ire.

Blood's not enough; Fire I'll revenge with Fire.

Fierce as young Phaeton I will return:

Great ROME, the World's Metropolis, shall burn:

On Tyber's flood new beams I will display,

And turn black Night into a golden Day.

The molten GODS shan't save their Capital,

Temples shall tumble down, guilt Roofs shall fall:

Bright Ruin, with a noise shall swallow all:

*Finis Actus quart.*

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT V. SCENE I.

*Britannicus, Flavius, Attendants.*

*Brit.* Fire, fire, I'm all one flame; fly, my Friends, fly,

Or I shall blast you; O my Breath is Brimstone,

My Lungs are Sulphur, my hot Brains boile o're;

Or you that needs will stay, let your eyes run,

If you did ever love this wretched Prince.

Now mourn, now weep. O, I will catch your Tears,

And drink the precious drops: I burn, I burn;

Fall, fall, you gentle Kills, you melting snows;

Call all the Winds to fan my furious fires;

Bring the cold North, Ple kiss his out-blown cheeks,

Upon my flaming breast I'll lay his head,

And hug him in my heart, for he is cold;

With my hot Arms I'll clasp his frosty limbs,

And twine about him like a wanton Girl.

Oh!

Oh! oh!

*Fla.* Can there be Gods, and not revenge?  
Can they behold this Noble Copy of  
Their own bright Excellence polluted thus,  
Thus rent and torn by sacrilegious hands,  
Yet idle sit, and sleep upon their Thrones?  
The voice of Murder's loud as their own Thunder.

Awake, awake, you drowsie Deities!  
Here is a sight so pitifully strange,  
'Twould melt the *Scythian's* Soul, who stands unmov'd,  
And fullen at his Mothers Funeral.

When Fame reports this deed, the rugged Moor  
Will stand abash'd, and groan to hear it told.  
Break, break, my heart: Oh you great GODS of *ROME*!  
Where are you all? Is this my welcome home?

*Brit.* Ha! he does weep! nay, pry thee do not hide it;  
By *Heav'n*, thou art my Friend: lend me thy store;  
My Eyes shall pay thee use, trust me they shall;  
Here, in my Bosom, lay thy pearly stock;  
*Heav'n's*, how he weeps! thou art a Virgin sure,  
Fall, you dear drops; Oh let me hug thee close:  
My Spirits are quite parch'd up, my palate's dry;  
Th' *Elizian* shades are cool: oh, let me dye.

*Flav.* Sir, I am *Flavius* have you quite forgot me?

*Brit.* I do remember thee; I lov'd thee well:  
Thou art a Noble Youth, the Child of Honour.

*Flav.* From *France* I come, and bring important News.

*Brit.* Ha! hold I'll tell thee news: *Octavia's* dead;  
She's cold, alas, but I am hot as fire.  
You amiable floods, when do you stray?  
Oh, come, and quench me, quench my raging flames.

*Fla.* O hear me, *Heav'n's*! hear me, you Just great Gods.  
If still your Ears are open to our Pray'rs,  
If yet you hold commerce with mortal Sighs,  
If yet the vows of humble Souls are heard,  
Oh now look down and hear my short address:  
No sort of Sustenance will I receive,  
Nor shall the sparkling bowl salute my lips,  
Nor drowsy Sleep visit my weary Eyes,  
E're I the Author of this Murder know.

*Brit.* 'Tis like thee; thou wert alwayes a true friend;  
In a bright flaming Chariot I'll ascend.

*Cyara*, Oh *Octavia*, my dear loves,  
You Queens of Innocence, you spotless Doves,  
Meet me, I come. *Flavius*? nay, pry thee nigher;  
Thus, in thy Arms, let me, kind youth, expire. [Dyes]

*Fla.* Farewel, bright Soul! thou Royal Excellence!  
Rare Union! Grandeur join'd with Innocence!  
The Fates of wicked Men are grofs and flow;  
Thine mov'd apace:—but I forgot my vow.

*Enter Petronius, Burrhus, with Guards.*

*Bur.* 'Tis done, my Lord, ne'r doubt it!

*Petr.* What is he?

*Bur.* 'Tis *Flavius*, new returned from *France*, he came  
Just as the Prince had drunk the poyson'd Wine.

*Petr.* That was not quite so well, for he is honest;  
But take no Notice: where's the Prince——give way.  
How came he dead? I charge you speak, answer me.  
Lay hold of all, in the name of the Emperor.

*Fla.* Hands off, I will declare the Author of  
This horrid Murder. Speak, who fill'd his Wine?

*Bur.* That, *Sir*, did I.

*Fla.* Then thou art his Murderer:  
Start not, base villain, black as thou art, the Prince  
With his last noble breath did pardon thee;

*Bur.* *Sir*, I was order'd——

*Flav.* Ha! is it then a Truth?

*Bur.* I know not; but——

*Fla.* Thou ly'st: it is too true.  
Guilt and Distraction, sit upon thy Brow:  
And 'tis as true that thou shalt die for't, Villain.

*Petr.* Hold, *Sir*: by what authority dare you do this? *[Draws.]*

*Fla.* Why, by the Gods, by Friendship, Justice, all:  
I'll answer thee no farther.

*Petr.* Ha! forbear.

Take him or kill him, Guards, I do command you.

*{ Flavius beats down Petronius, and kills  
Burrhus: the Guards disarm.*

*Fla.* Pardon, you Gods, my former blasphemy;  
O you are Just, and I adore your powers:  
Now lead me where you please, to life or death,  
Let me but pay my last observance here,  
My vow I have perform'd; and thou, dear Prince,  
Art in some part reveng'd: what my poor power  
Could possibly effect, is done; the rest  
Belongs unto the Gods.

*Petr.* Remove the bodies,  
And bring him away.

*[Exeunt.  
SCENE.]*



SCENE II.

Plautus, Mirmillon, and his Followers.

Plau. **H**ear you the news? **Mir.** Not I: you seem amaz'd.

Plau. A Currier from beyond the Alps arriv'd  
Reports the French are all in Arms, resolv'd  
To bring the War even to the gates of ROME,  
Fierce Vindex heads the Rebels, and all France  
Contributes largely: this the Emptour hears,  
And laughs; slights them, and swears he'll hang 'em all.  
The people mutiny in every street  
Their Tongues are lawless: nay, they murmur loud:  
Some modestly retire to corners, where  
They curse and damn him, call him parricide,  
A burner of their Houses, Friends, and Gods,  
Lo where he comes; the Lion's rous'd, his Eyes  
Look red with anger, lightning flames in them:  
What Thunder follows? Let's stand by and hear.

Nero, Flavius, Guards.

Fla. Was't not well done? I did his Murrer kill.

Ner. Know, hardy fool, he suffer'd by my will.  
I hated him, and did his Death contrive.  
Now, Villain, think how long thou hast to live.

Fla. To live? Oh who would live, thy humour's slave?  
A Torment worse than blackest Devils have.  
Let Parasites, the moths of Grandeur, fawn,  
These gilded canker-worms, Ambition's spawn;  
I do despise thee Tyrant as thou art;  
There's nothing great, nor manly in thy heart.

Ner. Are you so hot? He alters your fierce Tone.  
Plautus, go burn the villain; see it done.

Fla. Mid't of devouring flames, I will despise  
All that the Master Devil thou, Or the black crew of lesser Fiends devise.  
Thou shalt not hear a groan till I expire;  
But then Ple show thy face from the fire!  
Smile at the shock of death, and to the Gods retire.

Enter Petronius.

Petr. Dread Sir, two Messengers who come from Spain  
Report that Galba does new Wars maintain;

Heads the revolted Troops, and joyns with France;  
The *Germans* too come in, and all advance  
Against Your Majesty.

*Ner.* Ple hear no more.

Is *Galba* false?

*Petr.* They call him Emperor.

*Ner.* They do: but what's the name, without the pow'r?

Let him come on; this arm shall strike him dead,  
And snatch his borrowed Laurels from his head.

*Petr.* Your Treasures are consum'd with late Expence.

*Ner.* His gather'd Sums shall help that Indigence.

*Petr.* Time flies; 'tis fit your wisdom had design'd —

*Ner.* Do you consult, while I my pleasures mind!

Oh my *Poppea*, where art thou retir'd?

Never was blessing

So oft enjoy'd; yet still so much desir'd.

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE III

*Poppea, Piso, and Orho* listening.

*Pop.* Are they both dead? *Piso* and *Orho* too?

*Piso.* I saw'em first oppose the *Pyrat's* rage,

With numbers, scorning death, they did engage;

The GOD of battles blash'd as he look'd on,

Envying the just applause these *Heroes* won.

*Pop.* Virtue is still by violence oppress'd.

How his eyes sparkle! Pray relate the rest.

*Piso.* I have my self the doubtful hazard stood

Of fifteen battles, plung'd in waves of Blood,

The dreadful cast on Fortunes bank I threw,

Life was my lot; yet still in all my view

Of Wounds, of War, and Death, I never saw

Such pleasing horror, such delightful awe,

Such mighty force and art together laid;

Never was game of death so bravely play'd:

At last, O that I live such news to tell!

With conqu'ring tir'd, these Sons of valour fell.

*Pop.* Oh pow'r of Love! his words my Soul invade!

Sure 'tis some GOD, delighting in a shade:

The Glories of his eyes, like Stars in Night,

Or mourning Beauties, charm my wounded sight.

Since Honours are by *Cesar*, round me hurl'd,

Since I am made the Empress of the World,

Since

Since all's my choice, why do I doubtful stand,  
And with a pleasure which I may command?  
If, when I die, I must to Torments go,  
'Tis fit no time be lost; let pleasures flow.  
Fancy its eager Appetite shall cloy;  
Let Resolution holy qualms destroy;  
Henceforth, what e're I like, I will enjoy.

[Exit beckoning Pifo.]

*Orbo, Solus.*

O Hell! her crimes thy horror cannot match:  
Be swift, my Sword, her lust and life dispatch.  
This Key unlocks all doors throughout the Court.  
Are you so wanton? Yes you shall have sport.  
How am I rob'd of all I ever lov'd!  
My Soul is heavy, and would be remov'd.  
Once she was fair, the softest, sweetest wife,  
My heart's lov'd Joy, the Jewel of my life;  
Had she stood so, how happy had I been!  
But she's fallen, and glories in her Sin.  
Ah, the whole Sex is naught, false, and unkind;  
Falsier than flatt'ring Seas, or fleeting Wind:  
With panting hopes and fears they rack our Breast,  
Snatch our soft sleeps, and ravish downy rest:  
Oh, they are skill'd, practis'd in paint and art;  
Smile in our face, and stab us to the heart.  
Yet we see all; think nothing is unspy'd  
While they like Serpents on their bellies glide,  
And leave no Print behind, our search to guide.

[Exit.]

*Poppea, Pifo.*

*Pifo.* War is my Mistress; here I am unfit:  
Love's chaplet misbecomes a Warrior's head;  
I cannot cringe, my nerves too firm are knit;  
These limbs ne're lay upon a silken bed.  
Can you, that are the World's great Empress, take  
Delight in the embraces of a slave?

*Pop.* The Sun, for thy lov'd cheek, did Heav'n forsake;  
Why should not I the like advantage have?  
From a bright Orb of Glory I'll descend,  
And in thy gloomy Cell make my abode:  
No more a slave; henceforth thou art my Friend:  
A Cottage has, ere now, receiv'd a G O D.

*Pifo.* Who ever knew Night mingle with the Day?

*Pop.* Nothing agrees with Love so well as Night;  
Hush'd, and in darkness hid, the bashful play,  
And, happy as the bold, ravish delight:

F 2

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The most obdurate are by kindness won; I ob your choice,  
Your touches charm; nay, why do you withdraw?  
Grow thus, like a soft cloud upon the Sun;  
My pow'rful flame thy Icy Fears will thaw.

*Piso.* Your Grandeur awes me; yet, why should I fear?  
Something there is which my blood strangely moves;  
I am your slave; but are we private here?

*Pop.* As Hermits in their Cells, or Gods in groves.

*Piso.* Why did you name the Gods, that Sacred Sound  
The force of Thunder bears, and turns my Blood;  
My Spirits fly low, yet with your touch rebound,  
Like wanton Swallows, when they kiss the foot?

*Pop.* Such fears unworthy are my Blood of Throne;  
Give me a Fancy fixt to its delight:  
Tremblings and starts the fearful well may own;  
The valiant still refuse a distant sight.

*Enter Othello.*

*Othello.* Here's one that fain would try your mighty Art;  
What mean you? ere the Fight's begun, you intimate

*Pop.* Night, Horror, Death! Ah, whither than my  
*Othello.* Can you be valiant, and yet fear to dye?

*Pop.* Thus, at your feet, let me one moment grow;  
A little respite for my Soul allow.  
Repentance seizes on each vital part,  
And serious grief clings about my heart;  
Yet, ere I dye, let me my thoughts declare;  
O you are wrong'd; my still lov'd Lord, you are  
Your bed's defil'd, and I am all one stain;  
But yet my Blood may wash me white again.  
By killing me, you only can forgive;  
I am so wicked, that I would not live.

In pity say this of me, when I'm dead,  
She was not easily to ruin led;  
'Twas not a common Crown her Virtue bought;  
But mighty Glory with great Courtship wrought;

Then she was young:  
This, Sir, perhaps, may mitigate my fault.

*Othello.* Her cunning tongue retains its wonted Charms:  
Peace, Syren, and hold off thy guilty arms.  
I feel a gentle load drop on my feet.

Look, *Piso*, I suspect but dare not see't.  
*Piso.* Oh, do not, Sir: my eyes, by chance, did stray  
And half my resolution's ta'en away.

She weeps, she weeps! Gods! who would not admire  
To see such Floods rise from a Spring of Fire?

*Othello.* Yes I will see her: O thou false one, speak;



# The Tragedy of Nero

For thou shalt die,  
Though will the fatal Stroke, my own heart break.  
Look up, seek not to hide thy known disgrace.  
But shew thy fair, thy false, thy once lov'd Face.  
Oh answer me, what have I ever done  
That thou shouldst use me thus? cease thy vain moan,  
And speak, or practice o're thy mournful art,  
And sob an answer. Oh my troubled heart!

*Pop.* Yes, I will speak, my noble Lord, I will;  
'Tis but a short Request, be kind, and kill.  
Your words, like Daggers, through my Breast make way;  
A thousand Deaths you give me by delay.  
This one last look. — Oh put me out of pain;  
Ple speak no more;  
Nor shall my eyes e're look forth again.

*Otho.* A mortal Agony invades my blood;  
Something now whispers me, she may be good;  
And shall we blast young Virtue in the bud?  
An Earth-quake's here, all in confusion tost,  
In the disorder too, Revenge is lost.

*Piso.* Here you shall find it; let me give the blow.

*Otho.* Thou art so hasty still.

*Pis.* And you as slow.

*Oth.* She ne'r offended thee; I charge you hold.

*Piso.* His old Love burns again.

*Oth.* Alas, I'm cold.

Compassion this last Ardency did move;  
'Twas the effect of pity, not of Love.

*Enter Nero.*

*Ner.* The *Empress* dying? hold thy bloody hand.

*Pis.* If thou would'st save her life I charge thee stand;  
The bound of thy Progression there shall be:  
When e're thou stirr'st,  
She takes a step to Immortality.

*Ner.* Shall I be brav'd by a black Dog, a Slave?  
Hold, hold: my Pardon, on my knees humbly thus I crave;  
Stiff as an Elephant, I cannot bend;  
My little fault, let this Submission mend.

*Piso.* You stirr'd an Inch; 'tis vain to weep or pray.

*Ner.* Thou Son of Night, pernicious Creature, stay:  
I'th' name of all the Gods, Oh, let her live;  
Let me this bounty, on my Knees, receive,  
And thou, in all my Glories, shalt have share;  
Thy sooty hand shall the World's Scepter bear.  
And Diamond wreaths shall round thy Temples mourn,  
And Pearly Threads thy Jetty neck adorn.

*Piso.*

*Piso.* Just as you move, my Justice shall proceed.  
She shall not dye this time, though she must bleed. [*Stabs her in the Arm.*]

*Ner.* What hast thou done?

*Piso.* Not much: your posture keep,  
And stir not, lest I make a Wound more deep.

*Ner.* Behold I'm fix'd: thou art not humane sure,  
O, mighty Love!

'Tis for thy sake, I this disgrace endure:  
Had'st thou a Generous Soul, thou couldst not see  
The Lord o'th' World thus long upon his Knee.

*Piso.* Like a tall Tree to dull Earth thou shalt grow;  
You were a mighty God a while ago,  
And 'tis my Pride to make your Godhead bow.

*Ner.* I cannot suffer this. Awake, my Soul,  
Let haughty rage all thoughts of Love controul.

*Piso.* Nay, then 'tis time: Brother strike home.

*Oibo.* I have.

May all her faults be buried in her Grave.

*Ner.* Hence, from my sight; the Slaves to Torments bear;  
Mark me, let 'em be dying all the Year.

Tortures in this small Book you may explore,  
The Rack, the Wheel, Phalaris Bull; nay more;  
With care, turn all the bloody pages o're:

On fiery brazen pavements let 'em run,  
Their eye-lids snatch, let them face the Sun.

'S death, dare you stay? begone, I will not hear  
A word;—what need I thus my Spirits tear?

My looks hereafter shall my mind declare.  
Where is the Empress? bring her to my bed.

*Plau.* The Empress, said you, Sir? Alas she is dead.

*Ner.* Villain, thou ly'st; go pull his tongue out, haste;  
I'll see the roots on't; fly, h' has spoke his last.

Who answers now? Statues, By Heav'n! All dull?

*Mir.* If she were dead——

*Ner.* What then, Sententious fool?

If she were dead, I would restore her Breath,

And she should live,

Spight of her self, spight of the Gods, and Death.

My Pow'r's unlimited, as is their own:

My smile brings Life, and Death attends my frown.

My Empires bounds Nature alone does make;

The Sun his lodging in my Sea does take,

The grateful God too owns the mighty debt,

Thaws me down Clouds, and payes me gen'rous heat.

If she were dead?

Curse

*The Tragedy of Nero.*

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Curse of your criming and base Flattery;  
Ye are Lyars all: hence, from my presence fly.

*Enter Messenger.*

*Druf.* Lost, and undone: fly sacred Sir, you'r lost:  
*Galba* is just arriv'd upon our Coast;

With four score thousand strong he beats the way,  
The treacherous Senate too their Trust betray;  
Through all the Streets Proclaim him Emperour;  
But call you Tyrant, curse your Name and Pow'r.

[Exit.

*M.r.* Flie, flie, dread Sir; flie from this fatal ground;  
The base *Plebeians* have beset you round:  
*Petronius*, who a while sustain'd their heat,  
I saw, all bloody, from the Walls retreat.  
*Otho*, and *Piso*, from your Guards are freed,  
All *ROME* applauds them for this last great Deed.

[Exit.

*Enter Petronius staggering.*

*Ner.* Speak, my true friend; I'll be advis'd by you;  
What more remains, in these extremes, to do?

*Petr.* With faithful truth, Sir, I have serv'd you long:  
Yours was the right, I did my self the wrong;  
But now it matters not, 'twas Loyalty,  
And, as I liv'd, I in your service dye.  
My counsel is, you by your own hand bleed;  
The Senate has some poor base Death decreed.  
Death's but a name; by my example fall:  
I fear no Lakes, nor *Stigian* Frogs: that's all.

[Dies.

*Ner.* O Gods! but wherefore name I these feign'd powr's?  
The Elements, the Seasons, Days, and Hours,  
Were alwayes as they are, and will be so,  
And Nature her eternal round will go.

The Gods when we're awake their *Demons* keep  
At home, and only fright us when we sleep.

I would the utmost know of Destiny,  
And therefore, dying, do their Powers defy.

If they have any Thunder, let it come;

I'll stand the heavy shock, and brave my doom.

Down all at once---Ha! whence proceeds this noise?

[Thunder.

If there be Gods, sure this must be their Voice.

Speak on, talk louder yet, what shapes are these?

O dismal Scene of Death! my Arteries.

Tremble and Nature sinks beneath her weight.

I know you all: smile on, Thou art my fate.

What God was't hung thee there? He is my friend:

By thee, he points me out a noble end.

[Dies.

*Otho.*

Orbo, Piso, Attendants:

Orbo. 'Tis he, and as it seems by himself slain,  
 R O M E's sacred Genius, now look forth again;  
 Come from thy shroud, show thy Majestick head;  
 Direct our Joyes, the dreadful Tyrants dead.

Piso. Let's to the F O R T M halte and there proclaim  
 A mighty donative in Galba's name.  
 With all the Pomp o'th' Court his Camp we'll meet,  
 And his approach with Joyful shoutings greet:  
 Proclaim him Emperour with Trumpets sound.

\*While he, now made a God, shall scorn the Ground,  
 And, on our shoulders ride, with Lawrels Crown'd.

## EPILOGUE, Spoken by Mr. Harris.

**H**OW dull, how grave, and how precise ye sit,  
 As if ye had acted Love, not tasted Wit.

When the Trick's done, like Wine unstopp'd ye pall

After enjoyment, thus it's with ye all;

Tour modish Playes like jaunty Misses shew'd,

Be bravely drest, high flown, more fine than good

For Cloaths attract ye more than flesh and blood.

Like cover'd wians Beauties hid from sight,

Raise drooping fancy up to new delight.

For you Gallants, ye gay brisk witty Men,

He knows your killing trade, your damning strain;

Ye can as well Wenches and Drink restrain.

Tet faith for my sweet sake be kind to night,

Or may this heavy curse upon you light;

May each Gallant that has an assignation

Be jilted after four hours expectation;

Or if the masked Gentlewoman come

Spight of long Scars, may she be dogg'd from home.

May ye

In height of Titilation bear a rapping;

And then the jealous Cuckold take ye napping.

# FINI



